



Building Blocks For Independence



"No one can be free unless he is independent; therefore, the first active manifestation of the child's individual liberty must be so guided that through this activity he may arrive at independence. Little children, from the moment in which they are weaned are making their way toward independence."

~ Maria Montessori

These activities in conjunction with your awareness of your child's needs and abilities should provide some building blocks toward the next level of independence.

- Organize books and toys on shelves or containers that can easily be reached by your child. Encourage your child to put an activity away before choosing another. Label containers with pictures of contents so that the child can independently return toys to the right spot. (i.e. place a picture of a car on the box that stores cars)
- When purchasing clothes for your child think of the ease with which your child will be able to get in and out of clothes. Pants with elastic waists are easy. Overalls are difficult, not only in the morning but throughout the day as your child strives for independence in the bathroom. Take time to practice snaps, buckles, and belts when new clothes are purchased.
- Allow your child to help select clothes for the next day. You may wish to provide two or three choices to help in the decision-making. In the morning leave enough time for your child to begin dressing himself. This is especially important for those children conquering the task of tying shoes. If your child is not ready for tying yet, he/she could still slip shoes on his/her feet before you assist. With each new step rejoice with your child.
- Organize an area for your child to do "his work". A desk and chair with pencils, crayons, paper, scissors, and glue sticks gives the child ownership of a place to do projects independently. If a space is not available, a box with these contents, which your child can easily reach, allows freedom for creativity.
- Establish a hook or place that your child keeps his coat and school bag. This lends to a sense of responsibility in the morning and afternoon for your child. It allows transition times in and out of the house to run smoothly. Your child will love not to wait for you as you get ready, because you both can get ready at the same time. Even the youngest children will be taught how to flip on their coats at school and we will work on zippers and buttons.
- Children at this age feel a real sense of independence when assisting with house chores. Children can help set the table. Younger children can place napkins and silverware. As they grow older, add plates and glassware to the job. It is a great opportunity for developing order and practice counting. (i.e. please bring 5 plates to the table) At the end of dinner, children can help clear the table and place dishes by the sink. Laundry is another fun time for helping. Children can help sort darks, lights, and whites. Folding clean laundry and returning it to the right drawer increases fine motor skills and a sense of order. Matching socks is a favorite part of this job!
- In the kitchen, children feel a sense of accomplishment as they help prepare a salad, bake cookies, or slice vegetables for guests. There are many kid safe tools for the kitchen to make jobs easier and to take away your worry for safety. Another step toward independence is to have the opportunity to serve the food. At your own dinnertime allow your child to spoon out his own vegetables for his plate.
- Invite your child to pay for small purchases at the store to experience using money and receiving change.
- Children can write thank you notes or brief letters to Grandparents and friends. Younger children could draw a picture. Taking letters to the post office to mail offers a big sense of accomplishment.
- Visit the library and let your child select his/her own books to check out on his/her own library card.